

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 FEA-01 TRSE-00

AGR-05 /078 W

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P R 242026Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7561

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

USDAO/CARACAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, ELAB, TD

SUBJ: LABOR/POLITICAL CRISIS EASES

REF: POS 658 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY. SERIES OF ACTIONS AND RESPONSES BY
GOVERNMENT AND STRIKING UNIONS WITHIN THE PAST
THREE DAYS HAS CONSIDERABLY EASED TENSIONS AND REDUCED
THE LEVEL OF INCONVENIENCES TO THE PUBLIC CAUSED BY
CONTINUING LABOR DISPUTES. PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS
CONTINUES TO REMAIN ALOOF FROM THE BATTLE, HOWEVER.

END SUMMARY.

1. TWO SEPARATE MEETINGS OF CABINET AND ONE MEETING
OF GOTT NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL FRIDAY, MAR 21,
RESULTED IN GOVT. ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTENTION
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TO AMEND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT (IRA) TO REMOVE

PROHIBITION AGAINST SINGLE UNION REPRESENTING MORE THAN ONE BARGAINING UNIT IN AN ESSENTIAL INDUSTRY. THIS MOVE RELATED TO OILFIELD WORKERS' TRADE UNION (OWTU) DEMAND THAT TEXACO RECOGNIZE OWTU AS BARGAINING AGENT FOR ITS MONTHLY-PAID STAFF IN ADDITION TO ITS REPRESENTATION OF LABORERS. TEXACO IMMEDIATELY RESPONDED TO GOVT ACTION BY WITHDRAWING ITS LAW SUIT WHICH HAD SOUGHT LEGAL INTERPRETATION OF EXISTING IRA PROHIBITION. WAY HAS THUS BEEN QUICKLY PAVED FOR MEETING ONE OF TWO MAJOR OWTU DEMANDS AGAINST TEXACO. WAGES, OF COURSE, STILL UNSETTLED.

2. SEPARATELY, GOTT ANNOUNCED THAT IT WAS DIRECTING ARMY REGIMENT TO TAKE OVER AND ENSURE DELIVERIES OF GASOLINE AND FUEL OIL TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES, DEFINED TO INCLUDE POLICE, COAST GUARD, ARMY, HOSPITALS, ELECTRICITY COMMISSION, FIRE DEPT, AND WATER AUTHORITY. WITHIN HOURS THIS ACTION HAD BEEN JOINTLY DENOUNCED BY TRINIDAD MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION, CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, THE SHIPPERS ASSOCIATION, AND EMPLOYERS CONSULTATIVE ASSOCIATION AS TOTALLY INADEQUATE TO THE EMERGENCY AND A DEMONSTRATION OF LACK OF REGARD FOR THE PUBLIC WHICH WAS BEING SEVERELY INCONVENIENCED BY THE CURRENT SITUATION. OWTU LEADER WEEKES JUMPED INTO THE BREACH, HOWEVER, AND STATED HE HAD TOLD OWTU WORKERS FOR NON-TEXACO FIRMS TO DELIVER FUEL AND GASOLINE TO THE COUNTRY'S STATIONS SO THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER REASON FOR A GASOLINE CRISIS TO EXIST. THE OWTU PLEDGE WAS QUICKLY CARRIED OUT AND BY LATE SATURDAY MOST GASOLINE STATIONS OTHER THAN TEXACO STATIONS WERE AGAIN SERVING CUSTOMERS. TRAFFIC ALMOST RETURNED TO NORMAL BY MONDAY MORNING, SINCE MOST CAR OWNERS WERE ABLE TO BUY GAS SOME TIME OVER THE WEEKEND.

3. FOLLOWING THE ABOVE SERIES OF MOVES AND COUNTER MOVES FRIDAY, SATURDAY BROUGHT A SURPRISE THREE-HOUR MEETING BETWEEN GOVERNOR GENERAL SIR ELLIS CLARKE AND THE THREE PRINCIPAL LEADERS OF THE SUGAR AND OIL STRIKE: WEEKES, PANDAY, AND SHAH. NO DETAILS OF THE MARATHON DISCUSSION HAVE BEEN REVEALED, BUT THE LABOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LEADERS HAVE ALL EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE SATISFACTION AT THE DISCUSSION AND ITS CONCILIATORY TONE, AND HAVE PRAISED THE FACT THAT THEY HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS FULLY THE VARIOUS STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THE WAY OF SETTLEMENT OF THEIR GRIEVANCES.

4. RUMORS ARE NOW CIRCULATING THAT THE GOTT HAS DECIDED TO BUY-OUT THE REMAINING 45 PERCENT PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

IN THE CARONI SUGAR ESTATES AND REFINERIES, BUT THIS IS
YET UNCONFIRMED.

5. NOTE: IT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED THAT PREGNANT WOMAN
INJURED DURING BREAK-UP OF LAST WEEK'S LABOR MARCH
(REFTTEL) NEITHER DIED NOR WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED SO THAT
INCIDENT HAS BEEN REMOVED AS VOLATILE INCITEMENT TO
PASSIONS. NEVERTHELESS, NUMEROUS ORGANIZATIONS
CONTINUE TO JOIN THE CRY FOR INVESTIGATION OF ALEGED
UNNECESSARY POLICE BRUTALITY WHEN MARCH WAS DISRUPTED.

7. COMMENT: THE GOTT HAS BEGUN TO MOVE TO ADDRESS
THE ISSUES IN THE SUGAR AND OIL DISPUTES, ALTHOUGH
PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS' CONTINUED SILENCE REMAINS
AN INCONGRUITY TO ALL OBSERVERS. HIS USE OF THE
GOVERNOR GENERAL (WHO IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOVE THE
BATTLE) TO TALK WITH THE BIG THREE OF STRIKING LABOR
INSTEAD OF DOING SO HIMSELF OR HAVING MEMBERS OF HIS
CABINET PUBLICLY DO SO IS REMARKABLE. IT APPEARS
THAT WILLIAMS HOPES HE CAN SUFFICIENTLY COOL THE
SITUATION TO AVOID FURTHER CONFRONTATION AND POSSIBLY
EVEN SPLIT THE NEW LABOR COALITION WITHOUT EVER ENTERING
THE LISTS AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL. BY AVOIDING POLITICAL
BATTLE, HOWEVER, THE SOLUTION MAY HAVE TO ENTAIL
FAR MORE CONCESSION TO UNION DEMANDS (IN SUCH AREAS AS
RECOGNITION, WIDER BARGAINING RIGHTS, ACQUIRING OWNERSHIP
OF MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES, ETC.) THAN WOULD HAVE
OTHERWISE BEEN THE CASE IF WILLIAMS HAD BEEN WILLING
TO TAKE THE ISSUES POLITICALLY TO THE PEOPLE WITH
THE WIGHT OF HIS PRESTIGE.
MILLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SITREP, PETROLEUM INDUSTRY, WAGES, LABOR STRIKES, LABOR OBJECTIVES, BARGAINING RIGHTS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PORTO00683
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750102-0892
From: PORT OF SPAIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750322/aaaaatkn.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 POS 658
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <18 DEC 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LABOR/POLITICAL CRISIS EASES
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ELAB, TD, TEXACO, OWTU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006